



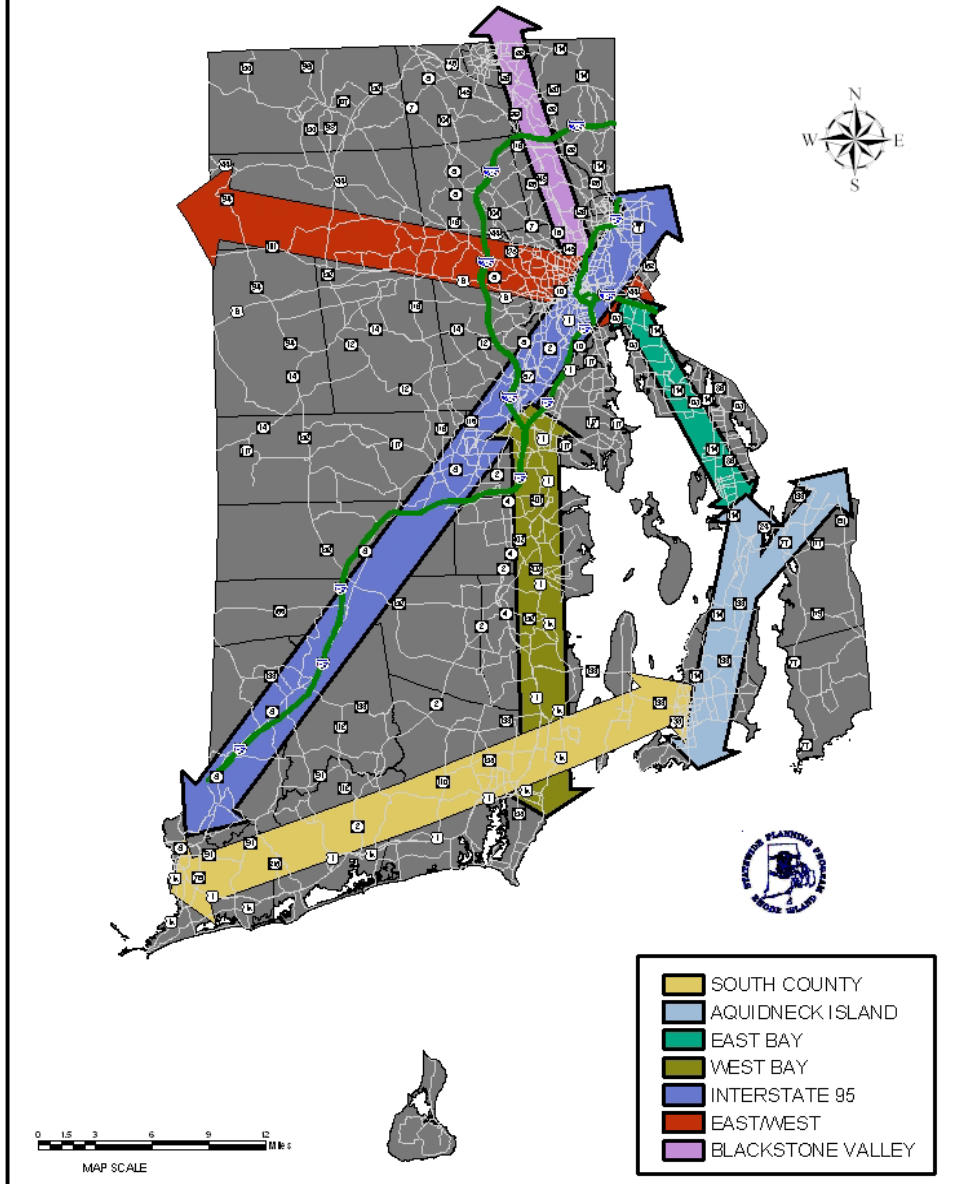
Executive Summary

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**RI STATEWIDE PLANNING PROGRAM
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Rhode Island Travel Corridors



EAST WEST

Cranston, Foster, Glocester, Johnston, North Providence, Providence, Scituate, Smithfield

SOUTH COUNTY

Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Jamestown, Narragansett, New Shoreham, North Kingstown, Richmond, South Kingstown, Westerly

AQUIDNECK ISLAND

Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, Tiverton

EAST BAY

Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Warren

WEST BAY

Cranston, East Greenwich, Exeter, Narragansett, North Kingstown, Providence, South Kingstown, Warwick, West Warwick

BLACKSTONE VALLEY

Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Providence, Smithfield, Woonsocket

INTERSTATE 95

Statewide study area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, in cooperation with the RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and the RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), sponsored this initiative. This planning concept emerged in Rhode Island in Transportation 2020 (2001 Update), the State's long range (20 year) ground transportation plan as an effort to connect land use and transportation planning as well as mitigate traffic congestion. Corridor planning can be used as a bridge between policy level state planning and more narrowly focused local plans. Specifically, this effort encourages: multi-modal and intermodal analysis of a travel corridor, consideration of "upstream" and "downstream" impacts, regional communication and cooperation, and the consideration of land use as well as transportation solutions to traffic problems. The objectives of this initiative were to define major travel corridors in the state, identify major corridor planning issues, and formulate a vision for each corridor.

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) of the State Planning Council helped to shape this study. Seven major travel corridors of statewide significance were identified. All 39 cities and towns are included in at least one corridor, and some are included in several. In many cases the corridors extend into Massachusetts and/or Connecticut. This was a multi-modal effort and was not confined to highways. Rail, bicycle, pedestrian, ferry, and transit were considered as appropriate. This study included a series of workshops for local planning officials in each corridor, followed by a series of public workshops.

This Executive Summary contains only the Vision Statements from each corridor. The complete results of this effort can be viewed on the CD-ROM. The Corridor Profiles, Planner Workshop Summaries, Public Workshop Summaries, Land Use Maps, Aerial Photographs, and Vision and Goals document the course of the study from data collection to identification of issues for further study. The vision statements as drafted are the result of a public process with input from professional staff. They should not be interpreted as policies of the state. No specific recommendations were developed as part of this Technical Paper. The results of this effort will be used: to formulate objectives, policies, and strategies in the next update of the long range transportation plan; as a platform for more detailed individual corridor studies; to prioritize projects for the Transportation Improvement Program; and to assist communities in making local land use decisions and identifying growth centers.

The public workshop exercise of prioritizing a series of planning issues was undertaken to get a sense within each corridor of what the key issues are, but also to compare the corridors with each other. Certainly these are not statistically valid observations, and therefore it is only possible to try to make some broad generalizations. The results are not surprising, and there was enough commonality to identify the following groupings:¹

Transportation: In the two most densely developed corridors, East Bay and Blackstone Valley, land use issues were less of a priority and Transit and Traffic congestion were the two top issues in both corridors.

¹ This exercise was not completed for the Interstate Corridor.

Land Use: Similarly, in the two corridors which contain some fairly rural areas and pressure for development, the opposite was true. Land Use and Community Character were selected as the most important two issues in the South County and West Bay Corridors.

Transitional Areas: The two corridors that had the greatest diversity of land, containing urban as well as rural areas, had mixed results. The East West Corridor, from Providence to Foster/Glocester, had Community Character and Traffic Congestion as their top two issues. Likewise, the Aquidneck Island Corridor which contains the very built up Middletown and Newport area as well as the pristine town of Little Compton listed Land Use and Traffic Congestion as the two most important issues.

It is also noteworthy to mention the other issues that did not rank very highly. Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Freight fall into this category. When forced to rank them in priority order, these items fell to the bottom because, for some people, these issues may not touch their lives on a daily basis. The table below documents the results of this exercise and contains some summary data.

ISSUE PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE

Issue	East/West	South County	Aquidneck Island	East Bay	West Bay	Blackstone	SUM	PERCENT	RANK	RANGE	#1's
Traffic/Congst/AccsMgt	13	6	8	4	6	6	43	20%	1	33-14%	2
Transit	1	5	3	5	6	7	27	12%	4	22-2%	2
Environment	10	1	3	1	4	4	23	10%	5	17-3%	0
Grwth/Sprl/Land Use	7	9	4	2	8	5	35	16%	3	25-8%	1
Community/Aesthetic	12	8	3	2	11	5	41	19%	2	25-8%	1
Safety	8	3	1	2	5	1	20	9%	6	13-3%	0
Pedestrian	1	3	1	3	2	2	12	5%	7	13-2%	0
Bike	3	1	0	3	2	2	11	5%	8	13-0%	0
Freight	5	0	1	2	0	0	8	4%	9	8-0%	0
SUM	60	36	24	24	44	32	220				

During the course of the planner workshops and public workshops, some issues emerged that were beyond the scope of the Travel Corridor Planning Initiative, but nonetheless impact the transportation system and are worthy of further study, either as part of an individual corridor study or as a separate undertaking. These issues include: local property tax, state surplus property, frontage roads, interstate commuting, and the addition of Route 117 as a corridor of statewide significance.

A VISION OF THE EAST/WEST CORRIDOR IN THE YEAR 2020

The East/West Corridor is preserved using growth management principals strengthening Village Centers including Esmond, Greenville, Harmony, Scituate and North Scituate that evoke a Main Street character. Villages are pedestrian friendly with sidewalks and crosswalks. The historic village character is revitalized through the rehabilitation of existing housing stock, infill development and increases in “good” development density that retains the local scale. The rural character of this Corridor is maintained by encouraging density to the village centers.

Route 6 is characterized by economic vitality and light commercial businesses that increase the tax base and integrate well with the local character. Safety improvements on Route 6 enhance this road both as a local connector and a major Hartford to Providence linkage for commuters and commercial transportation. In Providence, the Route 6 and 10 merge is redesigned for a smoother traffic flow. Congestion on Route 44 is reduced through access management internally connecting shopping areas. All roadways have improved maintenance including regular removal of debris. Safety is emphasized through enforcement of speed limits, additional traffic lights at designated intersections, and increased sidewalks and crosswalks enhancing pedestrian usage. Mall intersections are redesigned with left-turn storage lanes to ease traffic flow.

Increased public transportation services to the less densely populated areas of the Corridor are provided by RIPTA. Convenient schedules complemented by more Park n’ Rides have attracted more riders. Elderly and disabled persons have more access to the Ride. The Northwest Bike Trail connects these communities to each other and to the Statewide Bicycle Network.

A VISION OF THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY CORRIDOR IN THE YEAR 2020

The Blackstone Valley Corridor encompasses preserved Mill Villages such as Manville, Saylesville, Ashton and Lonsdale which showcase the unique architectural style, cultural quality and sense of community retained through mixed-use development creating vibrant and economically energized Village Centers. The re-urbanized communities of Central Falls, Pawtucket, Valley Falls and Woonsocket provide a range of improved housing consistent with its historical context and dynamic and diverse community composition. Re-introduction of train service in Central Falls and Pawtucket assists in the revitalization of these older cities.

While a high quality of life is preserved, improved economic opportunities are realized through regional planning of developed transportation options including rail, bus, bikeways and pedestrian walkways integrating linkages between Massachusetts’s and Rhode Island’s transportation systems. MBTA stations (such as Forge Park and South Attleboro) are served by RIPTA and public transit is improved between underserved communities such as Woonsocket, Smithfield, and Cumberland. Pedestrian movement is facilitated with crosswalks, sidewalks and better maintenance of walkways. Bike paths highlight this Corridor’s natural features and points of interest.

Highway safety is increased through enforcement of speed limits and the elimination of U-turn center median cuts. Access management along this Corridor is implemented reducing curb cuts specifically along northern Diamond Hill Road and Route 146. Routes 146, 122 and 114 are redesigned with improved intersections and increased left-turn storage lanes. The safety of pedestrians and bicyclists is improved with sidewalks, crosswalks, bike pathways and improved street cleaning. Route 99 continues to provide access to the Woonsocket Industrial Park and Northern Cumberland.

A VISION OF THE AQUIDNECK ISLAND CORRIDOR IN THE YEAR 2020

The unique qualities of this corner of the State are protected and showcased contributing to the economic vitality of the Aquidneck Island Corridor. Innovative and stringent growth management techniques protect open space and scenic vistas of ocean and agricultural lands by confining mixed-use development to designated Growth Centers. Developed transportation linkages connect Aquidneck Island and Sakonnet River towns with tourist and cultural destinations through a variety of transportation alternatives including expanded ferry service, increased bus schedules and improved bicycle and pedestrian friendly pathways. Express routes, provided by RIPTA, accommodate both the year-round residents and seasonal commuters. More Park n' Rides are available providing safe linkages to other transportation modes.

Route 138 maintains its character as a local connector with very limited commercialized development. By utilizing access management to reduce curb cuts and increasing left-turn storage lanes, traffic flows more easily along Routes 114 and 138. Traffic on Route 138 is decreased in large part due to new interior connections between shopping centers. New and/or improved east/west roads connecting Routes 138 and 114 facilitate movement within the corridor. Runoff is reduced into Narragansett Bay through landscaping and parking lot construction designed specifically to increase surface porosity. Route 114 is designated for freight and tour buses allowing Route 138 to maintain its more rural character. Breakdown lanes for buses and motorist ease congestion and increase safety.

Route 24 provides alternative routing from 95 and serves Routes 81 and 77 as routes to beaches and local destinations including linkages to alternative transportation modes. These roads, in Tiverton and Little Compton, continue to provide access to the local villages while retaining their character and scenic beauty.

A VISION OF THE EAST BAY CORRIDOR IN THE YEAR 2020

East Bay Corridor consists of preserved and vibrant coastal village centers, a retrofitted Route 136 and a developed water transportation system. Ferries provide a convenient and competitive alternative to driving to such places as Providence, Newport and locations in the West Bay. Water transportation is both an attraction to this unique Corridor and a pragmatic solution for the transportation demands of commuters, local traffic and tourist. Existing facilities are utilized creating a multi-modal transportation system.

Route 136 is retrofitted with traffic calming, pedestrian controlled signalization, interconnecting shopping centers, extensive landscaping, attractive signage, consolidated uses, and revised zoning and land-use plans. The retrofitting of Route 136 reinforces smaller scale commercial development and increases pedestrian and bike access decreasing the feeling of isolation while improving east to west passage. Safety is increased and congestion is decreased through the use of designated left-turning storage lanes and reduced curb cuts.

Route 114 retains and enhances its historic character. It is strengthened with mixed-use development and ADA compliant sidewalks along with bus turnouts providing safer transport of bus passengers. The Wampanoag Trail is protected for its visual and environmental values retaining the character of a parkway. Regional planning facilitates transportation, growth management, economic development, and environmental protection and preservation of the East Bay's unique character and natural resources.

A VISION OF THE WEST BAY CORRIDOR IN THE YEAR 2020

The West Bay Corridor provides affordable and convenient travel options through expanded transportation alternatives including regional high-speed ferry service, commuter rail, and bus service. Commuter rail successfully serves residents, shoppers, and air travelers with local and express trains. Local trains stop at East Greenwich, Wickford Junction, Kingston, Westerly, TF Green Airport, Providence, and Boston. The train stations along the Corridor support mixed-use, higher density, transit oriented developments, which in turn, justify increased public transportation services. Growth Centers such as Kingston, Wakefield, Peace Dale, Narragansett, Wickford and Warwick Station realize local scale, “good” development that complements their community design standards. Public schools no longer depend on property taxes, which decreases the need for commercial development to support the tax base. Growth in the area is understood at both the local and regional level. Sprawl is controlled due to implementation of growth management techniques accommodating the diverse range of land use along this Corridor. These communities understand that growth does not stop at town boundaries and regional planning guides the corridor in the most sustainable direction.

The Routes 4 and 1 segment of the Corridor/Improve the parkway character. This includes the elimination of median cuts and grade separations where possible, enhanced landscaping, and enforced speed limits. Routes 4 and 1 provide a driving experience that showcases the area’s character.

Route 2, south of Warwick, has strong land use controls maintaining the rural, lower density character along this highway. Route 2 is highlighted as an alternative access to the coastal communities and University of Rhode Island. In addition, throughout the corridor bicycle paths and pedestrian facilities are enhanced and expanded.

A VISION OF THE SOUTH COUNTY CORRIDOR IN THE YEAR 2020

The South County Corridor’s local character is preserved with a protected natural environment and improved intermodal transportation. There is higher density, mixed used and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) at the Corridor’s train stations. Access to commuter rail and improved bus service reduces commuter traffic to the Providence Metro area. Peace Dale, Wickford, Westerly, Kingston and Narragansett are identified as growth centers. Sprawl is contained through sound planning and strengthened growth management regulations.

Route 1 is redesigned to address safety concerns including excessive curb cuts and median turn-arounds making it a safer road for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians. As the gateway to Rhode Island, scenic views are protected through land use controls and improved signage directing tourists through the State. Adopted design guidelines preserve scenic roads throughout the corridor. Route 1 remains a coastal road and community connector. Route 2, a major connector to the northern part of the State, continues to retain its rural character.

Route 138 continues as a major connector between Newport and Route 95 and is the main access road to University of Rhode Island. Route 138 is improved by better traffic management while retaining both the historic character of Kingston and its scenic beauty.

A VISION OF THE INTERSTATE I-95 CORRIDOR IN THE YEAR 2020

The Interstate 95 travel corridor forms the spine of the Boston - Washington megalopolis (also known as Northeast Corridor). This immense urban area houses 70 million people. The financial, cultural, educational, medical, industrial, government, and historic resources located in this corridor contribute to a staggering concentration of wealth. The area is fortunate to have a healthy tourism industry supported by the region's mountains, forests, beaches, and other natural resources.

It is within this context that the vision for Rhode Island's core Interstate Corridor, which includes I-95, I-195, I-295 and Route 10, is of a highway system that is regionally planned fluidly connecting Rhode Island to both Connecticut and Massachusetts and beyond. The I-95 Corridor is the major element of a multi-modal system that effectively integrates the movement of commercial goods (freight) and people both within and through the State via a seamless system of highway, bus, rail, air and water transportation optimizing its geographical and infrastructural resources. Congestion is alleviated as a result of increased transportation options, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), road design and access management. Local, short trip use of the Interstate highway system is decreased.

This Corridor's land-use and transportation needs complement each other showcasing Rhode Island's diverse range of natural and man-made attributes and its unique capacity to utilize these resources effectively while preserving aesthetic quality. Changes in the property tax system eliminate the reliance on commercial development to fund local budgets. Stricter zoning guidelines for interchange areas, protects each community's distinctive character. Redundant big-box development and residential sprawl is controlled. All large developments are assessed through a regional impact analysis. Local communities place a high value on retaining community character and controlling sprawl through growth management techniques.

Development is encouraged in the cities and small town centers within the corridor. Westerly, Kingston, Wickford Junction, East Greenwich, Warwick, Providence, and Pawtucket, are well designed, multi-functioning multi-modal Transportation Oriented Developments. These TODs are mixed-use with high-density development, realizing the efficiencies and economies of scale of integrating work and living space in close proximity to transportation options. Economic development is thriving in the older towns designated as growth centers as well as the new TODs with conveniently located amenities and services.

Rhode Island's five Interstate entrances in Cumberland, Hopkinton, Pawtucket, East Providence, and at TF Green are attractive, welcoming Gateways. Enhanced signage throughout the State better guides all users. This sets the tone for a visually pleasing driving experience through the corridor that includes an interesting and aesthetically pleasing landscape traversing the rural, suburban and urban character of this Corridor.